

Ways to Wellness Challenge

Taking care of your health means taking care of your mind too. And AHS is reminding Albertans of simple steps to improve their mental health and wellness as part of the AHS 'What's your balance?' wellness initiative.

Engaging in physical activity, eating healthy foods, practising gratitude and having fun are all small steps that can improve your mental health and help to reduce stress.

Follow along and try these steps for yourself. Remember to share your thoughts and tools using #AHSwhatsyourbalance.



Be kind

Showing kindness can help you and others feel good.

Be yourself

Appreciating yourself can have a positive impact on your mental health.



Practise gratitude

Being grateful can help you develop a positive outlook on life.

Get active

Physical activity can improve your mood.



Eat healthy foods

What you eat can affect how you feel. Eat healthy to feel healthy.

Get your groove on

Music soothes the soul.



Laugh

Laughter is medicine for the mind and helps to reduce stress and tension.

Join the conversation, and be inspired to think about your wellness!

Share what balance looks like to you, using #AHSwhatsyourbalance on social media.

Or visit ahs.ca/whatsyourbalance to download the Wellness Scorecard to get started on your path to finding balance.

#AHSwhatsyourbalance



Alberta Health
Services

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Be kind

Showing kindness can help you and others feel good.



Kindness helps you and others by:

- Enhancing positivity
- Changing your perspective
- Creating a sense of community
- Helping us feel connected to others
- Reducing stress
- Improving mood and self-esteem

- Be generous with compliments
- Leave a kind note for someone special.

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Simple ways to spread kindness:

- Volunteer
- Help a friend or neighbour
- Ask someone how they are feeling
- Offer support and encouragement to others
- Say good morning and smile
- Make someone laugh



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Be yourself

Appreciating yourself can have a positive impact on your mental health.



Believing in and respecting yourself can help to prevent negative thinking.

It gives you the courage to try new things, and helps you feel proud of yourself for trying even when things go wrong or you make mistakes.

Here are some tips to help you to learn self-acceptance:

- Surround yourself with positive people who accept you as you are.
- Write down positive things about yourself and your life. Place these notes around your house as reminders to help you stay positive.
- Try something new. Getting out of your comfort zone builds confidence.
- Don't compare yourself to others. Focus on the qualities that make you unique.

- Compliment yourself like you would compliment a friend. Positive self talk builds confidence and reduces negative thoughts.

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Practise gratitude

Being grateful can help develop a positive outlook on life.



Giving and receiving thanks creates a more positive outlook, which helps to keep you emotionally balanced.

Here are some ways to be grateful:

Keep a gratitude journal Make it a habit to think about positive or good things you are grateful for daily and write them down.

Reflect through mindfulness, meditation, or relaxation

Take time to be still and calm and focus on the present moment.

Thank someone

Nurture your meaningful relationships. Send a thank you card or leave a note to someone you are grateful to have in your life.

Give back

Return kindness that someone extended to you.

Small gestures

Sometimes all it takes is a smile, handshake, or wave to express your thanks.

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Get active

Physical activity can help improve your mood.



Being active improves your mood, helps to decrease depression and anxiety, increases positive self-esteem, and improves sleeping patterns.

Just 30 minutes of walking for 10 days may be enough to reduce symptoms of depression.

Regular physical activity can:

Decrease stress

Physical activity releases endorphins that improve your mood and increase your tolerance to pain.

Improves mental and physical flexibility

Creates connection

Physical activity is a great way to spend time with your family and friends, meet new people, explore new interests, and get involved in your community.

Here are some tips to help you get moving

- Even 10-15 minutes of activity at a time can make a difference.

- Make a plan and write it down. Keep an activity journal to stay on track.
- Talk to your health care provider about activities that are right for you.
- Ask your family and friends to support you.
- Take regular breaks at work. Get up, move around, stretch or go for a walk at lunch.
- Try a group activity. Walk with friends or join a dance, exercise, or yoga class.

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Eat healthy foods

What you eat affects how you feel.
Eat healthy to feel healthy.



Chemicals in your brain affect the way you think, feel, and act while the food you eat influences your health and energy throughout the day.

What you eat can affect how you feel, and how you feel can affect your food choices. This is sometimes called the “food-mood connection”.

Here are some things you can do to help regulate your mood through food:

- Eat breakfast every day and avoid skipping meals. Eating regularly fuels your body and brain, and may help keep your mood stable.
- Get started with Canada’s Food Guide. Choose a variety of food from all four food groups daily such as:
 - Fruits and vegetables; dark green and orange vegetables, berries, citrus fruits and melons.
 - Grain products; whole wheat bread, brown rice, or brown pasta.
 - Milk and/or alternatives or fortified beverages that have calcium and vitamin D.
 - Meat and/or alternatives; such as poultry, fish, legumes, tofu, eggs, nuts, and seeds.
- Drink water. Dehydration affects your energy levels and mood.
- Limit processed foods, fast food, high sugar drinks, and snack foods high in fat, sugar and salt.
- Limit caffeine from coffee, tea, pop and energy drinks. These drinks can make you feel anxious, nervous or depressed and can impact your sleep.
- Limit alcohol. It can cause low mood, irritability and aggressive behaviour.
- Food can also be a great way to connect with others. Make time to eat or a cook healthy meal with family or friends.

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Get your groove on

Music soothes the soul.



Music has the ability to change your moods and can help pick you up when you're feeling down.

Listening to music can be an integral part of healthy living and lead to a greater quality of life.

Music has a positive impact on your mood and may:

- Help you focus and concentrate.
- Facilitate creativity and personal reflection.
- Help to ease pain.
- Improve sleep quality.
- Help you feel more optimistic, joyful, friendly, relaxed, and calm and promote positive emotions.
- Reduce negative emotions.

Here are some suggestions how to incorporate music into your life:

- Turn on the tunes while you are cooking, doing housework or studying.
- Listen while you are commuting to and from work or school.
- Make a play list with your favourite up beat songs to listen to when you need a 'pick me up'.
- Check out some live music shows in your community.

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Laugh

Laughter is medicine for the mind and helps to reduce stress and tension.



A good laugh can actually create physical changes in your body by stimulating your heart, lungs, muscles and increase endorphins released by your brain.

Smiling and laughing is a powerful way to lower stress, it can:

- Reduce negative emotions
- Help you relax and recharge
- Change perspective
- Strengthen connections with others

Here are some ways to bring more humour and laughter into your life:

- Smile, this simple act can boost the feel good chemicals in your brain, helping you and others feel happy.
- Look on the bright side. When you can, try to look for the positive in every situation.

- Get together with a friend who makes you laugh.
- Share a joke with others.
- Watch a funny movie.
- Make time for fun activities with friends and family.

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